

THIS ISN'T WHAT I THOUGHT IT'D
LOOK LIKE. THE WATER'S DARKER,
AND IT CREEPS UP THE SAND.

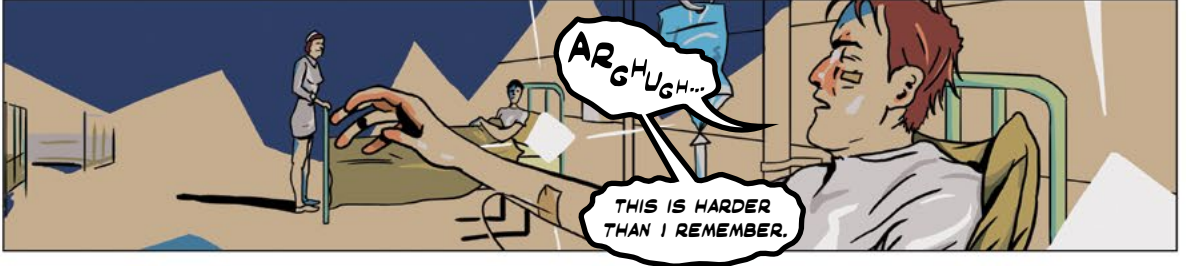
I CAN'T MOVE... I'VE NEVER FELT THIS
HEAVY. MY MUSCLES ARE TENSE... SWOLLEN.

ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT ARE THOSE
BLACK CIRCLES. I KEPT STARING AT THEM.
WREATHED IN BLUE AND ENCUMBERED IN
WHITE. I STARED AND I WAS FROZEN.



THE LONG BLACK.

IT STRETCHED
ON IN ME.





SETTLE,
ROBERT. STILL A
LOT TANGLED UP
IN THERE.



SETTLE? I CLENCH A
FIST, MY PHANTOM LIMB.

HOW?



YOU'RE A HERO, MY
BOY. YOUR COUNTRY IS
INDEBTED.



HOW.

MY GHOST KNUCKLES ARE WHITE.



WHAT'S THE LAST THING YOU REMEMBER?



HE LOOKS AT ME LIKE I'M CRAZY.

ME... CRAZY.



I LASH OUT. I'M NOT THE MAN HOLDING BEADED CHAINS, OR PRAYING BETWEEN WHIMPERS.



MY TONGUE DIGS UP A FULL COURSE OF CURSES. HIS HAND UPS THE DRIP BY THE BED.

THE BLACK CIRCLES RETURN. THEY INVITE ME BACK IN.

I DON'T THINK.



I DON'T CARE.



I SWIM BACK INTO THOSE DARK CIRCLES.

SHE LOOKS ON, "IT'S OK." I LISTEN.



I JUST SINK
BACK DOWN...



MIKE VENTIMIGLIA

BOB WULFF

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